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ABSTRACT

The State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO) periodically surveys its members about the most important higher education issues of the day. In January 2002, the most recent version of the survey was sent to the chief executive officers of statewide coordinating and governing boards in 49 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. The first section asked officers to rate the importance of each of 26 issues in his or her state. The second section consisted of open-ended questions about agency priorities, roles, and structures and the challenges faced. Responses were received from 50 individuals representing 48 agencies in 46 states. These responses show that SHEEO agencies are faced with some daunting challenges. They take seriously their responsibility to provide a quality education for a student population increasing in number and diversity. This expanding population requires more and different types of services, such as remedial education and financial aid. However, state higher education agencies are faced with times of fiscal challenge, cutbacks, and retrenchment. Instead of decreasing their activities or efforts, they are expanding their focus. SHEEO agencies report being increasingly involved with K-12 state departments of education and in strategic and economic planning for the state in an effort to make more salient the importance of higher education for the financial well-being of a state. SHEEO also recognizes the importance of accountability in higher education. They cite the need for more extensive data systems that would allow them to track students through their entire educational career and into the work force. Responses show that SHEEO agencies are responding to the challenges they face in ways that provide the opportunity for innovation and to make a real difference in higher education across the United States. Two appendixes contain the survey instrument and survey results. (SLD)

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SHEEO

State Higher Education Executive Officers

# Issue Priorities and Trends in State Higher Education

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# Issue Priorities and Trends in State Higher Education

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**May 2003**

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## Introduction

The State Higher Education Executive Officers association (SHEEO) periodically surveys its members about the most important higher education issues of the day. This survey serves a dual purpose. First, it is a straightforward manner through which SHEEO can find out what issues are foremost in the minds and efforts of the state agencies. This helps to inform us about how we can best be of assistance and what types of efforts we should undertake. The second purpose is to provide an opportunity for information exchange between states and other interested parties through the publication of the results.

In June 2002 an updated version of the Issue Priorities Survey was sent to the chief executive officers (SHEEOs) of statewide coordinating and governing boards in 49 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.[1] The survey included two sections. The first section consisted of a list of 26 issue areas. The SHEEOs were asked to rate the importance of each issue in his or her state on a five-point scale from "not important" to "very important." SHEEOs were also given the opportunity to include additional issues of importance that were not included in the list of 26 options.

The second section of the survey consisted of the following open-ended questions to which a SHEEO could give textual responses:[2]

- Have the priorities of your agency changed over the past three years? If yes, Please describe.
- Have your agency's roles and structures changed over the past three years? If yes, Please describe.
- Has recent federal legislation affected your agency? If yes, Please describe.
- Have changing demands affected your agency, such as demands from new constituencies or demands for new products? If yes, Please describe.
- What types of data, data sources, or data systems would be of the greatest utility to you in addressing your most important issues?
- What barriers or challenges exist that affect how you respond to your most important issues (these can be internal or external to your agency)?

Responses were received from 50 individuals representing 48 agencies in 46 states. This report presents those responses. The first section discusses the quantitative ratings of the issue priorities and how these ratings have changed over the past decade. Information from the open-ended questions is presented in the remainder of the report including discussion of legislation and other factors that are affecting the structure and function of state agencies for higher education.

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[1] Michigan does not have a SHEEO agency.

[2] A complete copy of the survey is available in Appendix A.

# Section One
# SHEEO Ratings of Issue Priorities in the States

## *Issue Priority Rating Results*

In presenting the results of the current Issue Priorities Survey, we decided to highlight every issue that was rated as a four or above on the five-point rating scale (1 = Not important, 5 = Very Important). This differs from past reporting in which only the top five issues were highlighted and is intended as recognition that any issue receiving a rating of four or above on a five-point scale is important from the perspective of the agencies and therefore merits discussion.

Ratings for each of the 26 issues were averaged across all states to obtain a single rating. The issues were then ranked according to this averaged rating from highest to lowest (Table 1). Additionally, a number of measures of central tendency were calculated for each issue. One of these measures was the standard deviation, which was used as an indication of consistency across ratings. There was a significant relationship between the rating of an issue as averaged across all states and the standard deviation of the state ratings. The fact that the relationship between these two measures is significant indicates a high level of agreement between states as to which issues are most important.[3]

### *Table 1:* Issue Rankings Based on One Respose Per State*

Mean Value Using a Scale of 1=Not Important to 5=Very Important

| | Average Rating |
|---|---|
| Teacher quality, preparation and professional development | 4.48 |
| Adequacy of state financial support | 4.46 |
| Workforce preparation | 4.35 |
| Tuition rates and overall student costs | 4.33 |
| Economic development initiatives | 4.30 |
| Accountability and effectiveness | 4.09 |
| Amount and types of student financial aid | 4.05 |
| K-16 systems/linkages between K-12 and postsecondary | 4.02 |
| Transfer and articulation | 3.93 |
| Access and diversity | 3.91 |
| Quality of undergraduate education | 3.80 |
| State funding models (e.g., use of formulas, performance-based funding) | 3.67 |
| Instructional technology/distance learning | 3.51 |
| Adequacy and maintenance of facilities | 3.43 |
| Measuring student learning | 3.39 |
| Faculty salaries | 3.32 |
| Institutional roles and missions | 3.30 |
| Student progress/degree completion/time to degree | 3.28 |
| Academic quality assurance/program review and approval | 3.19 |
| Tuition prepayment/college savings plans | 2.99 |
| Faculty workload and productivity | 2.86 |
| Admission standards | 2.83 |
| General education reform | 2.81 |
| Library and data networks | 2.80 |
| State-level governance changes | 2.64 |
| Faculty supply | 2.47 |

* Numeric ranking is average of state agency response with one response per state agency. For three states multiple responses were averaged to obtain one state-wide response. Responses were received from 50 individuals representing 48 agencies from 46 states.

[3] A table presenting all measures of central tendency is included in Appendix B.



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In looking at the ratings averaged for all agencies (Table 1), of the 26 issues included in the survey, eight were rated at four or above. These issues in order from highest to lowest average rating were:

- Teacher quality, preparation and professional development
- Adequacy of state financial support
- Workforce preparation
- Tuition rates and overall student costs
- Economic development initiatives
- Accountability and effectiveness
- Amount and types of student financial aid
- K-16 systems/linkages between K-12 and postsecondary

We also averaged agency responses based upon the type of agency, coordinating or governing (Table 2). In looking only at those issues rated at four or above, there was consistency between the two types of agencies on six of the issues. However, three of the issues rated as four or above by coordinating agencies were not rated as highly by governing agencies. These issues are amount and types of student financial aid, K-16 systems/linkages between K-12 and postsecondary, and transfer and articulation. Additionally, the governing agencies rated access and diversity at an importance level above four. This issue was not rated above four when looking at the responses from the coordinating agencies or the states overall. Also, transfer and articulation was rated above four only by the coordinating agencies, not by the governing agencies or when combining all agencies in the state. This may reflect the focus of these agencies on coordination between all higher education agencies in the state and consequent transfer and articulation processes. For the remainder of the report, we will discuss the ratings averaged for all agencies.

To further inform what is important to state agencies of higher education we grouped the eight issues rated at four or above into three basic themes:

- Quality of education: teacher quality, preparation and professional development; workforce preparation; and accountability and effectiveness
- Funding/financial issues: adequacy of state financial support; tuition rates and overall student costs; economic development initiatives; amount and types of student financial aid
- Expanded focus: K-16 systems/linkages between K-12 and postsecondary

Although there is only a single issue in the final theme, it implies an expanded focus for state agencies to a statewide level. This expansion of focus was echoed in the textual responses to the open-ended questions, as will be discussed in greater depth below.

## *Trends in Priority Ratings of Top Issues*

Looking at historical trends can inform us as to how reactive state agencies of higher education are and may indicate the presence or extent to which other forces affect their priorities. The matter of how priorities have changed for the agencies is addressed directly in the open-ended question section of the survey.

### Top Issues

Although there is some variation from year to year, issues rated as important in the current survey were similarly rated in past surveys showing a historic consistency in issues of importance to state agencies (Table 3). Additionally, six of the eight issues rated at a four or above in the current survey have been given increasingly higher

## *Table 2:* Issue Rankings by Type of Agency[1]

Mean Value Using a Scale of 1=Not Important to 5=Very Important

| | All Agencies | Coordinating Agencies[2] | Governing Agencies[3] |
|---|---|---|---|
| Teacher quality, preparation and professional development | 4.48 | 4.35 | 4.57 |
| Adequacy of state financial support | 4.46 | 4.29 | 4.69 |
| Workforce preparation | 4.35 | 4.30 | 4.45 |
| Tuition rates and overall student costs | 4.33 | 4.19 | 4.45 |
| Economic development initiatives | 4.30 | 4.28 | 4.36 |
| Accountability and effectiveness | 4.09 | 4.04 | 4.12 |
| Amount and types of student financial aid | 4.05 | 4.13 | 3.98 |
| K-16 systems/linkages between K-12 and postsecondary | 4.02 | 4.09 | 3.90 |
| Transfer and articulation | 3.93 | 4.06 | 3.83 |
| Access and diversity | 3.91 | 3.78 | 4.07 |
| Quality of undergraduate education | 3.80 | 3.70 | 3.90 |
| State funding models (e.g., use of formulas, performance-based funding) | 3.67 | 3.65 | 3.67 |
| Instructional technology/distance learning | 3.51 | 3.52 | 3.55 |
| Adequacy and maintenance of facilities | 3.43 | 3.44 | 3.48 |
| Measuring student learning | 3.39 | 3.37 | 3.45 |
| Faculty salaries | 3.32 | 3.23 | 3.50 |
| Institutional roles and missions | 3.30 | 3.30 | 3.25 |
| Student progress/degree completion/time to degree | 3.28 | 3.30 | 3.33 |
| Academic quality assurance/program review and approval | 3.19 | 3.13 | 3.21 |
| Tuition prepayment/college savings plans | 2.99 | 3.11 | 2.81 |
| Faculty workload and productivity | 2.86 | 2.78 | 2.98 |
| Admission standards | 2.83 | 2.76 | 2.90 |
| General education reform | 2.81 | 2.81 | 2.79 |
| Library and data networks | 2.80 | 2.72 | 2.95 |
| State-level governance changes | 2.64 | 2.72 | 2.57 |
| Faculty supply | 2.47 | 2.50 | 2.48 |

[1] Numeric rating is the average of agency responses with one response per agency. If there were multiple responses from the same agency, they were averaged to obtain a single agency response.
[2] Responses represent 27 agencies
[3] Responses represent 21 agencies

ratings since 1992. The two exceptions are: (1) accountability and effectiveness; and (2) adequacy of state financial support. Possible reasons for these exceptions will be discussed below.

The highest rated issue was teacher quality, preparation and professional development. This issue has held its place as the most important issue for the states overall for the last two surveys. The slight rise in its average rating (from 4.40 to 4.48) may reflect the continued and increased focus on teacher quality at the federal level, particularly through the current authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, President Bush's No Child Left Behind Act. Additionally, its position as a top priority in the states may reflect the level of scrutiny that postsecondary education is receiving relative to its responsiveness to criticisms of traditional teacher education programs (programs through institution-based Colleges of Education). These criticisms were made overt with the publication of the report "Meeting the Highly Qualified Teachers Challenge," the first report on teacher preparation as required under Title II of the Higher Education Act. This report was critical of traditional teacher preparation programs while at the same time praising alterative routes to teacher certification.



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## *Table 3:* Issue Rankings, Historical

Mean Value Using a Scale of 1=Not Important to 5=Very Important

| | 2002[1] | 1999 | 1996 | 1992 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Teacher quality, preparation and professional development[2] | 4.48 | 4.40 | 3.78 | 3.87 |
| Adequacy of state financial support | 4.46 | 4.07 | 4.53 | 4.54 |
| Workforce preparation | 4.35 | 4.35 | 4.00 | 3.73 |
| Tuition rates and overall student costs | 4.33 | 4.02 | 4.20 | 4.04 |
| Economic development initiatives[3] | 4.30 | 3.93 | 2.94 | 3.14 |
| Accountability and effectiveness | 4.09 | 4.24 | 4.40 | 4.38 |
| Amount and types of student financial aid | 4.05 | 3.91 | 3.80 | 3.72 |
| K-16 systems/linkages between K-12 and postsecondary | 4.02 | 4.12 | 3.86 | 3.72 |
| Transfer and articulation | 3.93 | 3.92 | n/a | n/a |
| Access and diversity[4] | 3.91 | 4.09 | 3.57 | 4.28 |
| Quality of undergraduate education | 3.80 | 3.91 | 4.02 | 4.35 |
| State funding models (e.g., use of formulas, performance-based funding) | 3.67 | 3.41 | n/a | n/a |
| Instructional technology/distance learning | 3.51 | 4.11 | 4.24 | n/a |
| Adequacy and maintenance of facilities | 3.43 | 3.61 | 3.35 | 3.49 |
| Measuring student learning[5] | 3.39 | 3.40 | 3.81 | n/a |
| Faculty salaries | 3.32 | 3.48 | 3.16 | n/a |
| Institutional roles and missions | 3.30 | 3.28 | 3.61 | 3.46 |
| Student progress/degree completion/time to degree | 3.28 | 3.32 | n/a | n/a |
| Academic quality assurance/program review and approval | 3.19 | 3.20 | n/a | n/a |
| Tuition prepayment/college savings plans | 2.99 | 3.08 | n/a | n/a |
| Faculty workload and productivity | 2.86 | 3.22 | 3.88 | 3.77 |
| Admission standards | 2.83 | 3.16 | 3.22 | n/a |
| General education reform | 2.81 | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| Library and data networks | 2.80 | 3.58 | 3.41 | n/a |
| State-level governance changes | 2.64 | 2.52 | 2.98 | n/a |
| Faculty supply | 2.47 | 2.71 | n/a | n/a |

Note: Shaded cells indicate mean scores 4.0 and higher.

[1] Numeric ranking is average of state agency response with one response per state agency. For three states multiple responses were averaged to obtain one state-wide response. Responses were received from 50 individuals representing 48 agencies from 46 states.
[2] In 1996, worded "teacher education and preparation"
[3] In 1996, worded "adequacy of support for university research, specialized graduate education and other economic development initiatives"
[4] In 1996, worded "minority student access and achievement"
[5] In 1999, worded "student learning productivity"

Second only to teacher quality in the current survey was the issue of adequacy of state financial support. This issue has been rated above a four for the last decade and was the top issue of importance in 1992 and 1996. The decline in rating for the 1999 survey most likely reflects the boon period the states were experiencing at that time relative to state financial support. Unfortunately, the boon time has ended and states are facing serious financial challenges often resulting in budgetary freezes or retrenchment. The strain that these state fiscal challenges are placing on higher education is evident in the high rating of this issue and also in its predominance as a theme in the agencies' textual responses.

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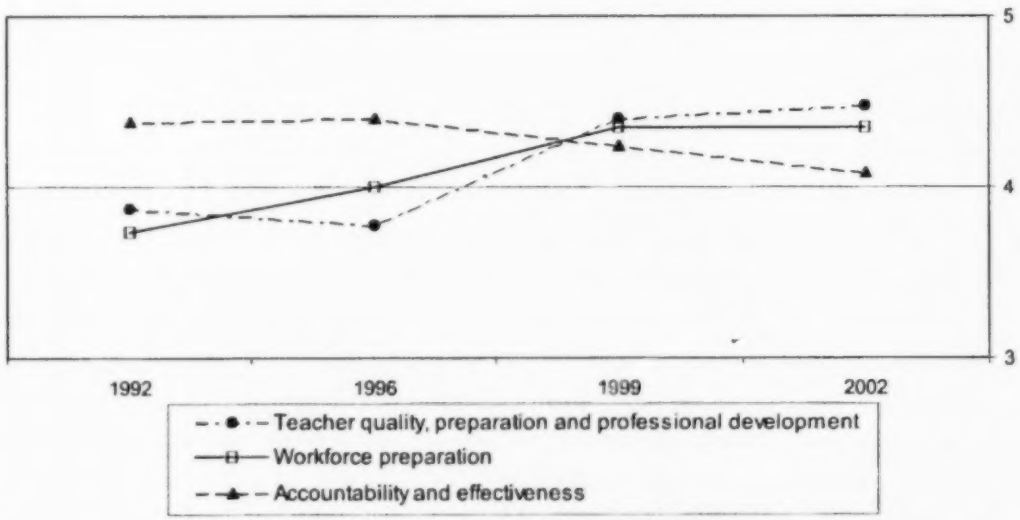
**Issues Grouped by Theme**

As mentioned above, three of the high rated eight issues deal with quality of education. These issues are:

- Teacher quality, preparation and professional development
- Workforce preparation
- Accountability and effectiveness

Although trend analysis for these issues (Chart 1) indicates a basically consistent and similar historic rise for the ratings of teacher quality and workforce preparation, the issue of accountability and effectiveness has shown a slight decrease in rating. This may be more reflective of an emphasis on accountability specific to these issues in comparison to accountability as a broad category. This interpretation is supported by the agencies' responses to the open-ended questions on the survey. These textual responses indicate that accountability and effectiveness are very much on the minds of the SHEEOs, either as a current issue or as one of increasing importance, perhaps due to the impending reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA).

### *Chart 1:* Historical Trend for Quality of Education Issue Rating

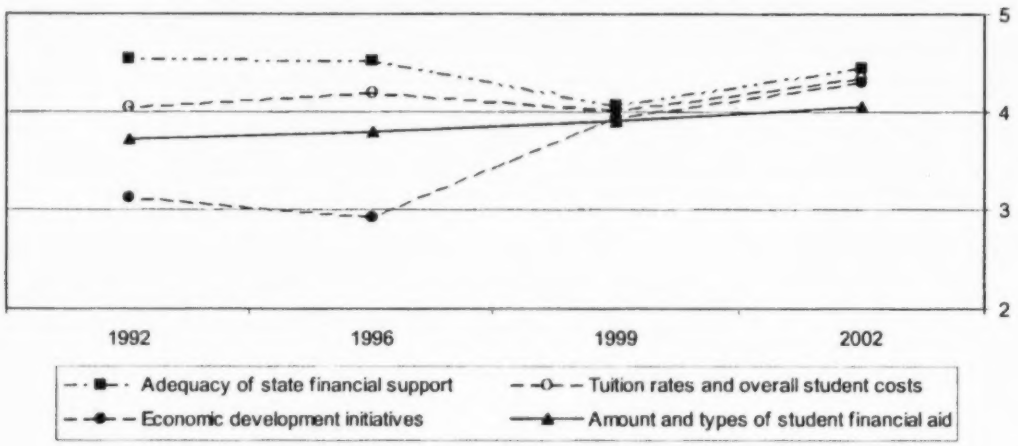



The other theme consisting of multiple issues was funding/financial issues. The issues included in this theme are:

- Adequacy of state financial support
- Tuition rates and overall student costs
- Economic development initiatives
- Amount and types of student financial aid

Interpretation of historic trends for these issues is a bit more complex (Chart 2). Interestingly, the historical ratings for adequacy of state financial support and tuition rates and overall student costs are parallel. This is not unexpected as increases in tuition are often concurrent with reduced state funding of higher education, making each an area of concern. Additionally, it is important to note that, although there has been some change in ratings of these issues, they have remained at a rating of four or above over the last decade. The only other issue that has shown this type of sustained importance is accountability and effectiveness.

***Chart 2:* Historical Trend for Funding/Financial Issue Rating**




The rating of economic development initiatives as an issue has shown strong changes from 1996 to present. However, this can be partially explained by the change of wording of this issue that occurred in the 1999 survey. Prior to that time the issue was worded "adequacy of support for university research, specialized graduate education and other economic development initiatives." This implied a focus on research and graduate studies, a focus that was removed when the wording was changed to its current state in 1999. The large jump in rating of this issue from 1996 to 1999 would suggest that this change in focus might have had a large effect.

In the first section of the survey, the SHEEOs were also given the opportunity to mention any additional issues of high priority in their state that were not included in the issues list. Although many respondents did not include additional issues, those who did emphasized the strain of fiscal challenges and increased demands – the challenge of trying to do more with less.

> *"Consolidation of academic programs among the three institutions is gaining increased attention as our budget situation worsens. Capacity issues are now of concern . . . ."*
>
> *"The Governor has expressed concern about whether [the state] can continue to afford having, for example, six different institutions with presences in [the state]."*

SHEEOs also offered some ideas or plans for addressing the issues. One agency stated the need to obtain advocacy for higher education by gaining recognition of the role of higher education in the economic development of the state overall, an issue that was addressed by several agencies in their textual responses. Another discussed the need to promote statewide collaboration, not just among higher education organizations but among businesses and government as well.

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## Section Two
## SHEEO Responses to Questions of Changing Priorities, Demands and Challenges

The second section of the survey asked the SHEEOs for textual responses to a series of open-ended questions. We received a number of responses offering detailed information about specific issues and challenges facing the state agencies. In analyzing the results, a number of themes emerged specific to each question. However, as mentioned above, the ubiquitous theme was the challenge of meeting all demands on the agency to supply quality opportunities, information, and services in time of financial straits. In fact, concerns over funding were the contextual setting for almost all other issues such as dealing with pressures to increase access to and participation in postsecondary education, the need to expand their focus to statewide issues such as K-16 systems and the role of postsecondary education in overall state economic development. The remainder of this section will address SHEEO responses to the individual questions.

### *Question 2: Have the priorities of your agency changed over the past three years?*
### *Question 3: Have your agency's roles and structures changed over the past three years?*

Questions two and three in the second section of the survey are closely related; a change in priorities may require or occur concurrently with a change in roles and structures. Because of this relation, the state agency responses to these questions will be discussed together.

Thirty-two of the forty-six states responding indicated that the priorities of their agency have changed substantially enough over the last three years to merit mention while only 17 agencies indicated a change in role or structure. The variety of content and depth of detail in agency responses to these questions were evidence of the myriad and varied concerns and challenges facing higher education in this country. However, some underlying themes were present.

It is clear that state agencies feel a strong sense of responsibility in ensuring access and affordability of higher education. It is further clear that agencies feel challenged in meeting these goals in these times of reduced state funding.

> *"We have begun to focus much more on achievement, affordability, and access. We need to ensure that students are prepared academically to succeed in college, have the financial means to go, and have institutions accessible to them regardless of family and employment situations."*

Several agencies mentioned their increasing involvement in or changing relationships with the K-12 education systems in the state. This most often takes the form of statewide K-16 systems or task forces. The proliferation of these types of K-16 systems and task forces reflects part of a greater philosophical change about the role of higher education. As education beyond a high school diploma is increasingly seen as a necessity for the individual and nation, the importance of making higher education options available to a broader population base have become more salient. K-16 systems are often the best manner in which to respond to this need. This is because a quality K-16 system includes a number of aspects that, currently, are addressed in a piecemeal or initiative-based fashion. These aspects include:

- The implementation or expansion of early outreach programs to ensure that students are aware of their postsecondary options
- An emphasis on clearly articulated expectations and curricular alignment between high school and college
- An awareness of the financial challenges faced by many traditionally underrepresented populations and the subsequent need for student financial assistance



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- The importance of the presence of quality data and assessment systems
- The production of high quality teachers in adequate supply to educate the K-12 students so they can be prepared for college

The creation of a quality K-16 system is a method by which these various issues can be addressed in a sustainable, coordinated manner.

In addition to involvement in K-16 systems, agencies mentioned other examples of an expanded focus. Most often, this type of shift included an emphasis on higher education's role in the state, both specific to education issues and to wider state-level issues such as economic development. The creation or expansion of master or strategic plans to include a statewide or state-level issue focus (such as workforce development or economic development) was most often mentioned by the agencies and reflects the importance of making overt higher education's role in state growth and development.

> *"Focus today is on how higher education will be funded and the role of the public higher education in economic development."*
>
> *"More integration of workforce initiatives with governor's office and other state entities."*
>
> *"More emphasis on 'what is important for system and state."*

Again reiterating the reality of the current financial pressures and uncertainty faced by public higher education nationwide, financial concerns remained a constant context for states' descriptions of their changing priorities. Particularly agencies voiced concern about potential results of budget cuts or retrenchment that may affect their ability to maintain high quality in educational offerings, accommodate increased participation in higher education and maintain affordability for students.

The concern over affordability of postsecondary education in the context of increased access and enrollment was reiterated by a number of agencies. This is particularly salient considering the relationship between state support of higher education and tuition as discussed in the previous section and in light of substantial recent increases in tuition nationwide.

> *"There is much greater emphasis on projecting the cost of student financial aid investments necessary to maintain financial access to post-secondary education. This is a much higher priority with the onset of large tuition and fee increases."*
>
> *"Emergence of financial adequacy issues as pivotal concern; concomitant concern for rising tuitions and fees."*

Finance-related concerns were not just limited to the effects on tuition and fees, but to very concrete results at state agencies such as loss of staff and how best to deal with potential further budget cuts.

> *"Core priorities similar, but fiscal realities have changed debate from 'new initiatives' to 'preservation of existing initiatives (or not)'."*


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Specifically agencies mentioned the importance of accountability as an issue of increasing importance both internal and external to the agency. Agency concerns over accountability issues are discussed in greater depth later in this report.

*"Internal focus on accountability and the quality of undergraduate education has increased."*

*"Agency is more results oriented. We are pegging our higher education outcomes to national averages and benchmarks."*

There were no clear themes in the agency level responses specific to how their roles and structures had changed. In fact, there was a dichotomy in the changes reported, which may be yet another indicator of the differences in agency responsibilities from state to state. A few agencies indicated a movement toward the decentralization of governance responsibilities by the agency. Duties such as approval of mission statements and program approval were no longer under the purview of the agency or the agency was more limited in its actions and authority relative to these duties. Other agencies, however, indicated that their scope of responsibility had expanded to include additional institutions or areas such as adult education, or the creation of statewide educational networks. This last duty is consistent with the increased state- or system-wide focus mentioned by several of the agencies as a new or altered priority for them. It is reasonable to assume that roles and structure would shift within the agency to the extent necessary to support a shift in priorities.

### *Question 4: Has recent federal legislation affected your agency? If yes, please describe.*

The extent to which federal legislation affects state agencies of higher education can vary widely depending upon the requirements of the specific legislation and function and infrastructure of the agency. Two pieces of federal legislation that substantively affect postsecondary education are the Higher Education Act (HEA) and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

The Higher Education Act (HEA) was last reauthorized in 1998 and, therefore, was addressed in the previous iteration of the SHEEO Issue Priorities Survey completed in 1999. HEA is due to be reauthorized in 2003 but there is no definite timeline as to when the process will be complete. The increased federal interest in accountability measures for higher education, specifically the use of persistence and completion rates as accountability measures, is consequent to the impending reauthorization. However, this aspect of HEA was not specifically mentioned by the agencies, probably because of the unclear timeline for reauthorization and the urgency of other issues. The aspect of HEA that was mentioned in agency responses were the grant programs included in Title IV – Pell, TRIO and GEAR-UP, however details as to how this was affecting the agency were not offered.

The federal legislation that was most frequently cited was the current authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, titled the No Child Left Behind Act. The section of this legislation most salient for state agencies of higher education is Title II, Part A, Teacher and Principal Training and Recruiting Fund. Subpart three of this section includes the grant program administered by state agencies of higher education for educator professional development. It includes funds from what was previously the Eisenhower Professional Development grant program. This act requires that agencies of higher education partner with a state education agency (K-12) to receive grant funding and it is subsequent to this requirement that state agencies report the strongest effect from this legislation, specifically the creation or strengthening of partnerships.

*"The Commission is partnering with the State Department of Education to enhance the 'No Child Left Behind' program."*

*"No Child Left Behind has strengthened our focus on K-16 issues/teacher quality issues."*



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Finally, some of the agencies mentioned anticipated changes relating to foreign students. Federal regulations require that all institutions that enroll foreign students be in "full compliance" with the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). The extent to which this may require changes in state agency function or data systems is still unknown.

### *Question 5: Have changing demands affected your agency, such as demands from new constituencies or demands for new products? If yes, please describe.*

Thirty-three of the forty-six states reported that their agencies have been affected by changing demands. As in their responses to other questions, the agencies' responses on changing demands were discussed in the context of trying to do more with less – demands for services are increasing without any consequent increase in financial support, and often with the reality of budget and personnel cutbacks.

> *"The key 'external' demands are enrollment pressure and budgetary cuts. The key 'internal' demands are professional development and support for morale through sustained periods of mid-year, multi-year reductions."*

Agencies indicated that they struggle to meet demands for increased enrollment, not just in the number of students served but also in terms of the populations served and concomitant resources needed to meet these demands. Specifically, a number of agencies reiterated their greater emphasis and involvement in K-16 systems to help get more and underrepresented students in the pipeline for postsecondary education. Agencies also discussed the subsequent need for resources for these students such as financial aid, remedial education and distance or technology-based education. Several agencies discussed the rapid changes in technology and their difficulties in staying current with limited financial resources. This issue is particularly salient considering the movement of postsecondary education to a more market-driven enterprise including competition from educational entities outside the traditional realm, most of which are technology-based.

> *"Rising number of 1st generation minority and underrepresented groups are placing new demands on us, e.g., financial aid, remedial education."*
>
> *"Developments in all forms of technology, specifically including demand for distance education, have and will change how we operate."*

In addition to enrollment related concerns, agencies reported facing demands from other state agencies and legislative bodies for increased involvement in and responsiveness to state economic development issues and workforce needs. Agencies also mentioned their efforts relative to teacher preparation and teacher quality issues.

### *Question 6: What types of data, data sources, or data systems would be of the greatest utility to you in addressing your most important issues?*

When asked about the types of data, data sources, or data systems that would be of greatest utility to the agencies, the responses could be categorized into three basic data areas; student tracking data systems, contextual data, and comparative data. The function of these data and data systems, as discussed by the agencies, were for both predictive and projective value and for accountability purposes.

Student tracking and related data refers to data systems that allow for the ability to track students between institutions and across state lines. Additionally, some of the agencies noted either the desire or plan to integrate data systems and share student-related data between K-12 and postsecondary education systems in the state thereby expanding their ability to track students' education careers. The type of student-related data agencies mentioned

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was not limited to their educational career, however. Some agencies expressed a desire to be able to track students into the workforce.

> *"Data systems that allowed for tracking of students across state boundaries to evaluate student persistence to degree, time to degree, and student-borne related debt."*

Clearly the significance of these types of data systems lies in their utility for accountability purposes. A data system that allows for detailed information on a unit-level basis, including the student's educational path, could be used to assess aspects of financial aid, the efficacy of preparation and articulation from K-12 to postsecondary education or between different types of institutions, and persistence in and completion from postsecondary education regardless of the institution of initial enrollment.

The types of contextual data agencies noted included economic and demographic data, population projections and labor market data. Need for this type of data at both the state and regional level was mentioned. The most frequently mentioned data types and those that would be of the greatest utility were comparative financial data. These types of data as mentioned by state agencies included:

- State support for higher education
- Categories of higher education expenditures
- Instructional cost data
- Financial aid information and projections
- Information on formulas used for any financial appropriations and projections

The most frequently and forcefully mentioned type of financial data was financing of higher education, both related to amount of state support and delegation inside system.[4]

### *Question 7: What barriers or challenges exist that affect how you respond to your most important issues (these can be internal or external to your agency)?*

Finally, we asked the SHEEOs to tell us what barriers or challenges they faced in meeting the demands and responsibilities of their agencies. Thirty-nine of the forty-six states gave us situations and examples. Overwhelmingly, and not unexpectedly, the largest challenge cited was financial. SHEEO's level of frustration in trying to improve or even maintain current levels of quality, both in education-related resources and offerings, and in their own agency staff and resources, was evident in their responses.

In the context of fiscal concerns, a number of SHEEOs reported a seeming lack of support for higher education or a lack of recognition of its importance for the state among public entities or legislative bodies. This manifests not only in lack of concrete support but also in lack of understanding as to the difficulties fiscal challenges create in meeting increasing demands placed on the agencies.

> *"There are more responsibilities than there are dollars to address them."*

> *"Externally, a lack of a consensus and willingness by policy makers to address the core issue of public funding for higher education. Internally, difficulty in recruiting and retaining skilled staff . . ."*

[4] Note: SHEEO is currently establishing a comprehensive system of data gathering and analysis that will meet the needs previously addressed by the work of Kent Halstead.



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Several agencies also mentioned internal challenges. Among these were difficulties in achieving cohesion or coordination between the institutions in the system. Also, data and accountability issues were discussed including the need to meet demands for accountability data in the context of limited resources.

## Conclusion

SHEEO agencies are faced with some daunting challenges. They take very seriously their responsibility to provide a quality education for a student population increasing in both number and diversity. This expanding student population requires more and different types of services, such as remedial education and financial aid. Yet, state higher education agencies are faced with times of fiscal challenges, cutbacks and retrenchment. They are being asked to do more with less. Instead of decreasing their activities or efforts, however, they are expanding their focus. More SHEEO agencies are involved with K-12 state departments of education through K-16 task forces and councils. They also report being increasingly involved in the strategic and economic planning for the state in an effort to make more salient the importance of higher education for the financial well-being of a state in times when education beyond high school is fast becoming a necessity.

SHEEOs also recognize the importance of accountability in higher education. They site the need for more extensive data systems that would allow them to track students through their entire educational career and into the work force. They also site the need for comparison financial data to help in current budgeting and projecting for future needs.

State systems of higher education are responsible for ensuring quality, access, and affordability of state higher education. They must do this in the context of shifting financial tides, changing legislation, altering demands and expanded competition from educational organizations outside of the traditional realm. SHEEO agencies are responding to the challenges they face in ways that provide the opportunity for innovation and to make a real difference in higher education across the nation.

# Appendix A: Survey Instrument

## State Higher Education Executive Officers

### Survey of 2002-2003 Higher Education Issue Priorities and Trends

### June 2002

**Section I - Issue Priorities**

1. From the perspective of an "expert witness" on higher education, please rate the importance of each issue **in your state overall**. Your response should reflect the perspectives of diverse constituencies in your state (e.g., legislature, state and system-level agencies, institutions, and the general public), not just your own viewpoint or your agency's agenda.

**To respond, please click on the box that best indicates the level of importance the issue has for your state at this time.**

| | Not Important | | | | Very Important |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (a) Quality of undergraduate education | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| (b) Access and diversity | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| (c) Teacher quality, preparation and professional development | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| (d) Institutional roles and missions | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| (e) Accountability and effectiveness | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| (f) Academic quality assurance/program review and approval | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| (g) Measuring student learning | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| (h) Instructional technology/distance learning | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| (i) Library and data networks | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| (j) Adequacy of state financial support | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| (k) State funding models (e.g., use of formulas, performance-based funding) | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| (l) Tuition rates and overall student costs | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| (m) Amount and types of student financial aid | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| (n) Tuition prepayment/college savings plans | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| (o) Admission standards | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| (p) Student progress/degree completion/time to degree | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| (q) Transfer and articulation | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| (r) K-16 systems/linkages between K-12 and postsecondary | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| (s) Workforce preparation | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| (t) Economic development initiatives | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| (u) Adequacy and maintenance of facilities | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| (v) Faculty salaries | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| (w) Faculty workload and productivity | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| (x) Faculty supply | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| (y) State-level governance changes | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| (z) General education reform | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

**For the following questions, please click on the box indicating your response or on the shaded area for questions requesting a text response.**

Please describe any additional issues of importance in your state:

**Section II - Trends**

2. Have the priorities of your agency changed over the past three years? Yes ☐ No ☐
   If yes, Please describe.

3. Have your agency's roles and structures changed over the past three years? Yes ☐ No ☐
   If yes, Please describe.

4. Has recent federal legislation affected your agency? Yes ☐ No ☐
   If yes, Please describe.

5. Have changing demands affected your agency, such as demands from new constituencies or demands for new products? Yes ☐ No ☐
   If yes, Please describe.

6. What types of data, data sources, or data systems would be of the greatest utility to you in addressing your most important issues?

7. What barriers or challenges exist that affect how you respond to your most important issues (these can be internal or external to your agency)?

| **Respondent Information** |
|---|
| State/Agency: |
| Respondent: |

**Thank you for your assistance in completing this survey. Please return your completed survey by July 12, 2002. You can return your survey by email or fax to:**

**Tricia Coulter**
**tcoulter@sheeo.org**
**fax:(303)296-9016**

# Appendix B: Issue Priorities Survey Results

## *Table B1*

## Measures of Central Tendency

Mean Value Using a Scale of 1=Not Important to 5=Very Important

| | Average | Median | Mode | Standard Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Teacher quality, preparation and professional development | 4.48 | 5.00 | 5.00 | 0.81 |
| Adequacy of state financial support | 4.46 | 5.00 | 5.00 | 0.91 |
| Workforce preparation | 4.35 | 4.75 | 5.00 | 0.84 |
| Tuition rates and overall student costs | 4.33 | 5.00 | 5.00 | 0.84 |
| Economic development initiatives | 4.30 | 4.25 | 5.00 | 0.77 |
| Accountability and effectiveness | 4.09 | 4.00 | 4.00 | 0.85 |
| Amount and types of student financial aid | 4.05 | 4.00 | 5.00 | 0.93 |
| K-16 systems/linkages between K-12 and postsecondary | 4.02 | 4.00 | 5.00 | 0.96 |
| Transfer and articulation | 3.93 | 4.00 | 4.00 | 0.87 |
| Access and diversity | 3.91 | 4.00 | 5.00 | 0.99 |
| Quality of undergraduate education | 3.80 | 4.00 | 4.00 | 1.00 |
| State funding models (e.g., use of formulas, performance-based funding) | 3.67 | 4.00 | 5.00 | 1.10 |
| Instructional technology/distance learning | 3.51 | 4.00 | 4.00 | 0.87 |
| Adequacy and maintenance of facilities | 3.43 | 3.75 | 4.00 | 0.94 |
| Measuring student learning | 3.39 | 3.25 | 3.00 | 1.08 |
| Faculty salaries | 3.32 | 3.00 | 3.00 | 1.11 |
| Institutional roles and missions | 3.30 | 3.00 | 3.00 | 1.00 |
| Student progress/degree completion/time to degree | 3.28 | 3.00 | 4.00 | 1.00 |
| Academic quality assurance/program review and approval | 3.19 | 3.00 | 3.00 | 0.90 |
| Tuition prepayment/college savings plans | 2.99 | 3.00 | 3.00 | 0.97 |
| Faculty workload and productivity | 2.86 | 3.00 | 3.00 | 0.96 |
| Admission standards | 2.83 | 3.00 | 3.00 | 1.04 |
| General education reform | 2.81 | 3.00 | 3.00 | 1.22 |
| Library and data networks | 2.80 | 3.00 | 3.00 | 0.90 |
| State-level governance changes | 2.64 | 3.00 | 3.00 | 1.18 |
| Faculty supply | 2.47 | 3.00 | 3.00 | 0.94 |



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